

Clark County EIS Comprehensive Plan Update

April 2002 Public Workshops

Summary of Response

June 2002

OVERVIEW

From April 8-15, 2002, Clark County hosted five public workshops to kick-off the environmental impact study and capital facilities planning for the Comprehensive Growth Management Plan Update. These community meetings were designed to: 1) Provide citizens with information about the update of the Clark County Comprehensive Plan; and 2) Obtain informed feedback on the range of land use alternatives and the approach to investing in capital facilities under consideration in the plan. Approximately 800 people attended the five meetings. The number of people attending ranged from 115 in La Center to about 280 in Brush Prairie.

The events were publicized in a variety of ways. Most of the participants indicated they had learned about the meeting through a countywide letter from the Board of County Commissioners. Other methods of publicity included: news releases, newspaper advertisements, and the Clark County website.

The area gatherings were held at the following locations on these dates:

- Battle Ground Senior Center – Monday, April 8
- Camas Fire District Station 42 – Tuesday, April 9
- La Center High School – Wednesday, April 10
- Chinook Elementary School – Thursday, April 11
- Prairie High School – Monday, April 15

STRUCTURE

Each area gathering consisted of an hour-long open house, followed by a 45-minute presentation and then an hour-long workshop with wrap-up. Citizens attending the open house portion of each meeting toured displays at six stations manned by county staff and consultants. The stations included the following topics:

- Sign-in/orientation
- Background and decision process
- SEPA
- Selecting a preferred land use alternative
- Focused public investment areas
- Feedback

After visiting the topic stations, citizens listened to a brief presentation by either Pat Lee or Bob Higbie of Clark County Long Range Planning. The objectives of the meeting were explained and the public was given an opportunity to ask questions.

Due to the unanticipated large turnouts at the meetings, the format for the workshop portion of the meeting varied. It involved either full group facilitated discussion or small group break-outs depending on the size of the audience and the meeting room logistics. Large group discussion was used for the Battle Ground and Camas meetings, while facilitated small group break-outs were chosen for the La Center, Chinook Elementary and Brush Prairie meetings.

Participants of the workshops were given a handout containing Draft Evaluation Criteria developed by county staff. They were instructed to rank the proposed criteria and add additional criteria of their own.

In addition, workshop participants were asked to comment on several questions, including:

- Do the draft land use alternatives represent an appropriate range of choices about how to manage growth in Clark County?
- What should be the most important considerations when ranking Focused Public Investment Areas?

SUMMARY OF FEEDBACK

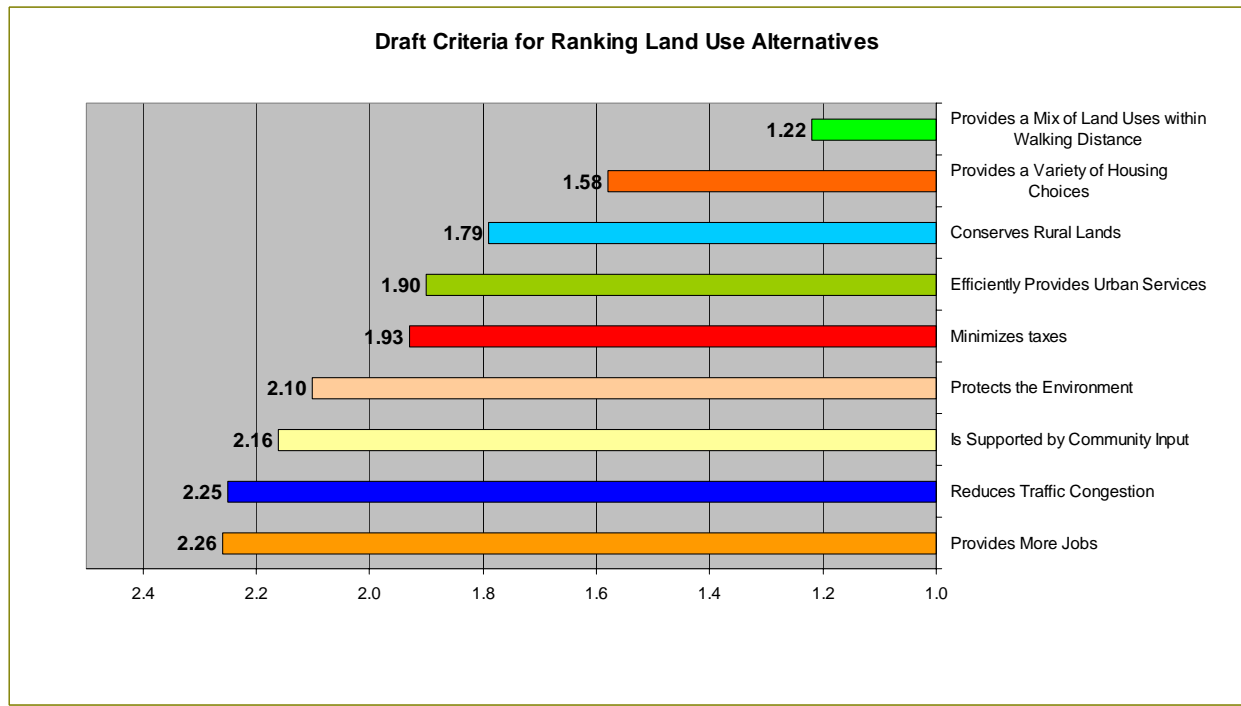
Question: What Criteria Should Be Considered in Selecting a Preferred Land Use Alternative?

Participants were asked to rate the following criteria that were based on previous public input:

1. Provides more jobs
2. Provides a mix of land uses within walking distance
3. Minimizes taxes
4. Protects the environment
5. Reduces traffic congestion
6. Conserves rural lands
7. Provides a variety of housing choices
8. Is supported by community input
9. Efficiently provides urban services

Meeting participants were asked to rank the proposed draft evaluation criteria. The Table below reveals the total ranking for all of the meetings combined (the higher the number, the higher the ranking). As the Table indicates, the criteria that resonated the strongest with the meeting participants, and were thus rated highest, were the following:

1. Provides more jobs
2. Reduces traffic congestion
3. Is supported by community input
4. Protects the environment



Comments on Initial Criteria

Participants were also asked to provide additional comments about the draft evaluation criteria. Several key themes that were common at each meeting emerged from these additional comments. These are the most common comments heard and do not necessarily correlate to the highest ranked criteria:

Provides more jobs

- Desire for higher wage/living wage/family wage jobs
- Environmentally friendly businesses

Provides a mix of land uses within walking distance

- Puts jobs near where people live
- Avoids sprawl

Protects the environment

- Preserves/adds open space
- Provides stream and watershed buffers
- Protects viable agricultural and forest lands

***Provides a variety of housing choices**

- Affordable housing

(*Note: This criteria rated high (23 comments) only at the Brush Prairie meeting, during which there were many representatives of the home builder community in attendance.)

Additional Criteria Generated from the Meetings

In addition to the draft evaluation criteria put forth by the County, there were many more criteria proposed by the meeting participants. The following is a summary of the most popular additional criteria, grouped by subject:

Rate and Density of Growth

- Makes best use of available land. *With a total of 56 comments, common suggestions were to use existing urban lands first and encourage infill.*

Other comments that received a moderate number of comments:

- Accommodates a reasonable/realistic rate of growth. *For most comments, the implication was that assumed rate of growth was too low or unrealistic.*
- Slows down growth and development
- Uses higher densities
- Uses lower densities

Quality of Life

- Provides for parks and recreation. *This was one of the two most common suggestions (100 statements). People were concerned with providing parks, biking trails, recreation opportunities, green spaces overall and within easy access to neighborhoods (linkages).*

Other comments that received a moderate number of comments:

- Preserves community/rural character
- Protects/enhances Quality of Life.

Equity, Fair Play

- Respects/Protects property rights. *This was one of the two top issues raised (101 statements).*

Education

- Provides for public education. *This was top concern (68 comments). Individual comments cited a need to coordinate schools with growth, consider infrastructure needs and maintain an adequate amount of schools.*

Alternative Transportation

- Encourages multi-modal transportation development. *This was raised by a notable number of respondents at each meeting (a total of 45 comments). Specific concerns were to encourage mass transit (usually light rail), preserve light rail corridors, and accommodate pedestrians and bikes.*

Other Infrastructure

- Keeps new land uses consistent with existing neighborhoods/uses. *Although this received a moderate number of comments (24), it is consistent with one of the major themes that was raised in earlier phases of the study.*

Other comments that received a moderate number of comments:

- Provides for emergency services. *Although not as common, this issue was raised by at least a few people at all but one meeting.*
- Provides for realistic, efficient infrastructure. *Suggestions included coordinating infrastructure improvements and providing infrastructure before growth (concurrency).*

Question: Do the draft land use alternatives represent an appropriate range of choices about how to manage growth in Clark County?

Response to this question was indicated by a show of hands at Battle Ground and Camas, while the La Center, Chinook Elementary and Brush Prairie participants responded in the small group break-outs. Response to this question was divided. While a majority of respondents overall appeared to feel the concepts for the land use alternatives were sufficient, there were a significant number of participants at each meeting that did not. The most common suggestion for an additional concept was:

- A concept that assumes a higher rate of growth.

Other alternative concepts repeated by a moderate number of those who did not feel that the alternative concepts were sufficient included:

- A concept based on lower densities
- A concept allowing smaller rural lots
- A concept based on protection of environment
- A concept with more flexibility to respond to changes in projected growth

While many felt that the concepts were sufficient, they had suggestions for the execution of those concepts (i.e. where the growth would be placed – suggested changes to the maps).

Question: What should be the most important considerations when ranking Focused Public Investment Areas?

Responses to this question were consistent with responses to the previous criteria question. While the Focused Public Investment Area objective of cost-effective infrastructure investments to support jobs appeared to resonate with most participants, an additional criteria was raised by significant number of participants:

- Balance investments in the county. *This was stated in a variety of ways, from concerns that the county not just invest in Vancouver, to specific suggestions of how to distribute the investments.*

The tension between growth management and individual rights continued, as did the strong interest in preserving or enhancing quality of life through parks, schools, and the environment.

Many of the comments also addressed the specific types of jobs that should be fostered. Some of the most common were:

- Living wage
- Small business
- Professional
- Environmentally friendly

CONCLUSION

Overall responses at the meetings demonstrated a wide diversity of opinion about how growth should be managed in Clark County. While many of the verbal comments focused on property rights, particularly for rural landowners, the criteria ratings and written comments showed more interest in growth planning objectives, such as focusing growth in urban areas and providing alternative transportation. Participants also showed a very high level of interest in quality of life issues, such as parks, open space, the environment.